

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 7 1979

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Arkansas Post

AND/OR COMMON
Arkansas Post National Memorial

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Arkansas Post National Memorial

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Gillett

VICINITY OF

2

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Arkansas

05

Arkansas

001

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER |

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service Southwest Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 728

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe,

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Mexico

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Arkansas County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

DeWitt

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE National Survey of Historic Sites & Buildings, Theme V
"French Exploration and Settlement." Pp. 64-66

DATE

September, 1958

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service, Southwest Regional Office

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located in southeastern Arkansas on the north bank of the Arkansas River, Arkansas Post National Memorial forms the southernmost tip of a level grassland known as Grand Prairie. When European settlement of this region began, Grand Prairie stood high above the river, and its tall bluffs promised protection from floods. Today the land on which the Memorial stands lies low in relation to the water level, and forms a peninsula bounded by the waters of Post Bayou, Post Bend, and the Arkansas River. Due to the natural processes of erosion, flooding, and changes in the river's channel, many of the historic sites associated with Arkansas Post now lie underwater.

I. The French and Spanish Periods, 1686-1803

Evidence indicates that the original settlement at Arkansas Post, the De Tonti Post of 1686, as well as the German colony founded by John Law in the 1720s, were established to the east of Grand Prairie and outside the Memorial boundaries. It was not until 1752, when Lieutenant La Houssaye established a fort on the heights of Grand Prairie, that European settlement reached the area of the present Memorial.

Little is known about the appearance of the La Houssaye fort or of the small settlement that grew up adjacent to it. The Spanish took possession of this fort in 1771, but not long afterwards moved their garrison downstream, to a new fort near the mouth of the Arkansas. The civilian settlement at Arkansas Post was never entirely abandoned, however, and in 1779 the Spanish garrison moved back to Grand Prairie. The Spanish now built a new structure, Fort San Carlos III, near the site of the old La Houssaye Fort, and within the present Memorial boundaries. This fort consisted of several small buildings and storehouses, and was surrounded by a reinforced stockade.

Although Fort San Carlos III ably withstood a British attack in 1783, it was deteriorating badly by the late 1780s. As the river cut into its northern bank, the bluffs of Grand Prairie were eroding away, carrying parts of the fort with them. In the 1790s, after years of repair and piecemeal rebuilding, a new fort, San Estevan de Arkansas, was constructed one-half mile back from the river's bank, still within the boundaries of the Memorial.

This fort was still standing in 1804 when the Americans took possession of the area. In that year it consisted of a stockade, a house, 36 x 16 ft., a barracks, 50 x 20 ft., a storehouse, 45 x 20 ft., and a kitchen, 20 x 12 ft.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Arkansas Post

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

Most of the buildings were shingled; the storehouse was elevated on props. The Americans renamed the complex Fort Madison and used it until 1810, when it was abandoned.

Today the sites of the three forts---the La Houssaye Fort of 1752, Fort San Carlos III of 1779, and Fort San Estevan de Arkansas/Fort Madison--all lie underwater off the present shoreline of the peninsula. All three sites lie within the authorized boundaries of the Memorial.

II. The American Period, 1804-1862.

The civilian village of Arkansas Post, occupied since the 1750's, had grown into a town of about 30 houses by the last decade of the 18th century. Grouped along two main streets, the houses were of a French architectural style, with high-gabled, shingled roofs, tall chimneys, and wide galleries.

American occupation of this town began after 1803. Several new buildings were constructed in addition to the older French and Spanish houses. A United States factory, or trading house, was built to the north of the town, and in 1810 consisted of a two-story oak frame storehouse and a one-story dwelling house with a pitched roof. William Montgomery, in 1818 or 1819, built a one-story tavern near the center of town which was used as a meeting place by the Arkansas General Assembly.

The establishment of Colonel Frederick Notrebe, a French entrepreneur who came to dominate the town, included a house, a store, a brick store and warehouse, a cotton gin, and a press. In the 1840s a large, two-story rectangular brick building was constructed to house the Arkansas Post Branch of the State Bank of Arkansas. Other structures went up during this period, but even during the height of its development, Arkansas Post never consisted of more than 40-50 buildings.

Very few structural remains are visible today at the site of the town of Arkansas Post. The two most notable features are a cistern and a well. The cistern is approximately 12 feet in diameter and 20 feet deep, and is constructed of brick laid approximately 2 feet thick. It was probably built around 1820 with bricks from the Post brickyard. Before the National Memorial was established, the cistern was partially restored; bricks from the foundation of the old Bank building were used. The Park Service has now installed a modern grill over the cistern for safety reasons.

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The brick well dates from the early 1800s. It is approximately 20 feet deep with an inside diameter of 3 feet and is constructed of brick laid one brick thick. The Park Service has used cement mortar to stabilize the above-ground rim of the well, which was originally of dry-wall construction.

Another early 19th century well is located at the site of the town of Arkansas Post, but is no longer visible. Its rim does not extend above the ground level, and the entire well hole has now been filled with soil for safety reasons.

III. The Civil War Period, 1862-1865

The town of Arkansas Post was already on the decline in 1862, when Confederate General Churchill arrived at the Post to construct an earthen fort commanding the Arkansas River. Located about one-quarter mile north of the village, Fort Hindman (or Post of Arkansas, as the Confederates called it) was a square, full-bastioned fort whose exterior parapets were each 100 yards in length. There were three gun platforms in each bastion and one in the curtain facing north. The fort enclosed three frame buildings, two magazines, and a well. The entrance to the fort was on its southwest side.

A line of trenches ran 720 yards in a westerly direction from the fort, and terminated at Post Bayou, at that time a narrow waterway. The trench line was intersected at regular intervals by wooden traverses. The fort, as well as several buildings in the town of Arkansas Post, were badly damaged by naval bombardment during the battle in 1863.

The site of Fort Hindman now lies underwater, to the east of the peninsula and within the authorized Memorial boundaries. Portions of the Civil War trenches built in connection with Fort Hindman are still visible in the northwestern section of the Memorial. The trenches appear intermittently as low mounds for about 100-150 yards along a line running east-west. At least two depressions, probably artillery positions, have been found along the line of trenches. The trenches have been partially cleared of brush.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Arkansas Post ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

A historic road, used by Civil War troops during the battle in 1863, is still visible in the northern area of the Memorial. It parallels the entrance road for about one mile south from the entrance to the Memorial, and in many places has been paved over by the entrance road. Where it has not been covered over, the historic road is barely visible, although overgrown with native grasses.

Arkansas Post National Memorial today presents a pleasant, park-like appearance, with open, grassy areas alternating with clusters of hardwoods and pines. An artificial lake has been created in the southern portion of the Memorial, just north of the town site. The presence of the Arkansas River is strongly felt; its slow waters bound the Memorial on two sides. This landscape of land and water, though considerably altered since the time the area was first settled by Europeans, is the dominant element in the historic scene at Arkansas Post today. The great majority of the Memorial's historic resources remain invisible, lying either underground or underwater.

There are within Arkansas Post National Memorial several structures which do not meet National Register criteria. These include the modern visitor center/administration building, the Superintendent's residence, a mobile home used as a residence, and several structures in the maintenance and picnic areas. These structures serve a management purpose and occasionally require alterations necessitated by changes in their functions. Modifications to these supportive buildings will reflect a compatible architectural style and will not intrude upon the historic resources of the Memorial.

B SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Arkansas Post served for almost two hundred years as a strategic outpost for three nations seeking control of America's interior: France, Spain, and the United States. Established first as a trading post and used successively as a military stronghold, a frontier settlement, and a territorial capital, Arkansas Post was primarily a frontier institution. It developed into an American town that played an important part in the early history of Arkansas.

The first settlement was established downriver from Arkansas Post in 1686 by the Frenchman, Henry de Tonti. His hopes of founding a successful trading empire with the Quapaw tribe in the Arkansas River area were not realized, and by 1720, de Tonti's settlement was all but dead. In 1720, King Louis XIV of France granted an area in the vicinity to John Law, a Scottish speculator, who sent over a group of German settlers. This group was left to its own devices when Law's project failed. No trace of the German settlement has been found.

As international tensions increased, the Post became crucial to the defense of French interests in the Mississippi Valley, and in 1752 a strong, new fort was established on the bluffs of Grand Prairie. When her New World fortunes were lost in the French and Indian War, France ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1765. Spain did not take over possession of Arkansas Post until 1771.

The Spanish used the outpost much as the French had: for defense of her borders and for trade with the Indians. The two functions were closely related, for an Indian tribe won over through trade could become a useful military ally. This proved important to the only Revolutionary War engagement that took place in present-day Arkansas. In 1783, James Colbert, a British Captain leading a group of Chickasaw Indians and a few whites, attacked the Post. Colbert was repulsed by Spanish forces, who were aided by Quapaw Indians.

Arkansas Post reverted to her original owner in 1800, when Spain retroceded Louisiana to Republican France; three years later Arkansas Post became an American frontier community.

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Trading continued to be the town's major industry, and in 1805 the United States established a government trading house at the Post. Explorers and adventurers, among them Lt. James B. Wilkinson, Stephen Long, and Thomas Nuttall, passed through on their way west, and the population grew with the arrival of new American families. In 1813 Arkansas Post became the seat of Arkansas County; in 1819, it was chosen to be the capital of the newly-organized Arkansas Territory.

For the next two years the town boomed. In November, 1819, William E. Woodruff arrived at the Post and established the Arkansas Gazette, the first newspaper published in the territory. Promoters and speculators established two new towns near the Post, and sold lots. Comet, the first steamboat to ascend the Arkansas River, tied up at the landing below the town.

In 1821 the territorial capital moved to more centrally-located Little Rock. Many families and businesses, including the Gazette, followed suit. Arkansas Post continued for some time to be an important river town, and in the 1840s could boast a racetrack, a female seminary, and a branch of the State Bank of Arkansas. By the 1850s, however, the community had shrunk in size and had fallen into a severe decline.

In 1862 Arkansas Post attracted the attention of the Confederate Army. General Thomas J. Churchill erected an earth fort near the village, commanding the Arkansas River, to guard the river approach to Little Rock. In January, 1863, Union General John McClellan began to move against the Post with 30,000 troops. In a battle fought on January 10 and 11 this force, aided by nine gunboats, attacked Fort Hindman and brought the outnumbered Confederate defenders to surrender. The victory strengthened the Federal supply line, and contributed to the eventual capture of Vicksburg. And the fierce bombardment of the Fort and nearby village spelled the end of the town of Arkansas Post.

Today, Arkansas Post is a National Memorial to the soldiers, explorers, and settlers who made this frontier outpost a strategic element in the struggle for the trans-Mississippi, and an important chapter in the development of the state of Arkansas.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bearss, Edwin C. The Post of Arkansas. MS prepared for the National Park Service, 1959. Copy in Southwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Santa Fe, N.M. 003318
- Bearss, Edwin C. and Lenard E. Brown. Arkansas Post National Memorial: Structural History, Post of Arkansas, 1804-1863 and Civil War Troop Movement Maps, January, 1863. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1971. CRB13
011227
- National Park Service. Master Plan, Arkansas Post National Memorial, 1973.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 389.18

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|-------|----------|-------|-----|-----|------|---------|---------|----------|----------|-----|-----|
| A | 1,5 | 6,5,3 | 400 | 440 | 3,7,6 | 060 | 000 | B | 1,5 | 6,5,3 | 44,0 | 3,7,6,4 | 300 | 265 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | | | | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | |
| C | 1,5 | 6,5,1 | 9,6,0 | 3,7,6,4 | 300 | 265 | D | 1,5 | 6,5,1 | 9,6,0 | 3,7,6,5 | 030 | 000 | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | | | ZONE | EASTING | | NORTHING | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point which is the Southeast corner of Spanish Grant number 2339; thence due South 920 feet more or less to a point which is the Southwest corner of Spanish Grant number 2297; thence due East 1060 feet more or less to the West bank of the trace of the Arkansas River prior to the 1944 Stillwell cut-off; thence in a Southerly direction along the meander of the West bank of the trace of the Arkansas River 3825 feet more or less to the North bank of the

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jane E. Scott/Dwight Pitcaithley

Historians

June, 1979

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 728

TELEPHONE

(505) 988-6501

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ___

NO ___

NONE ___

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ___ National ___ State ___ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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JUL 10 1972

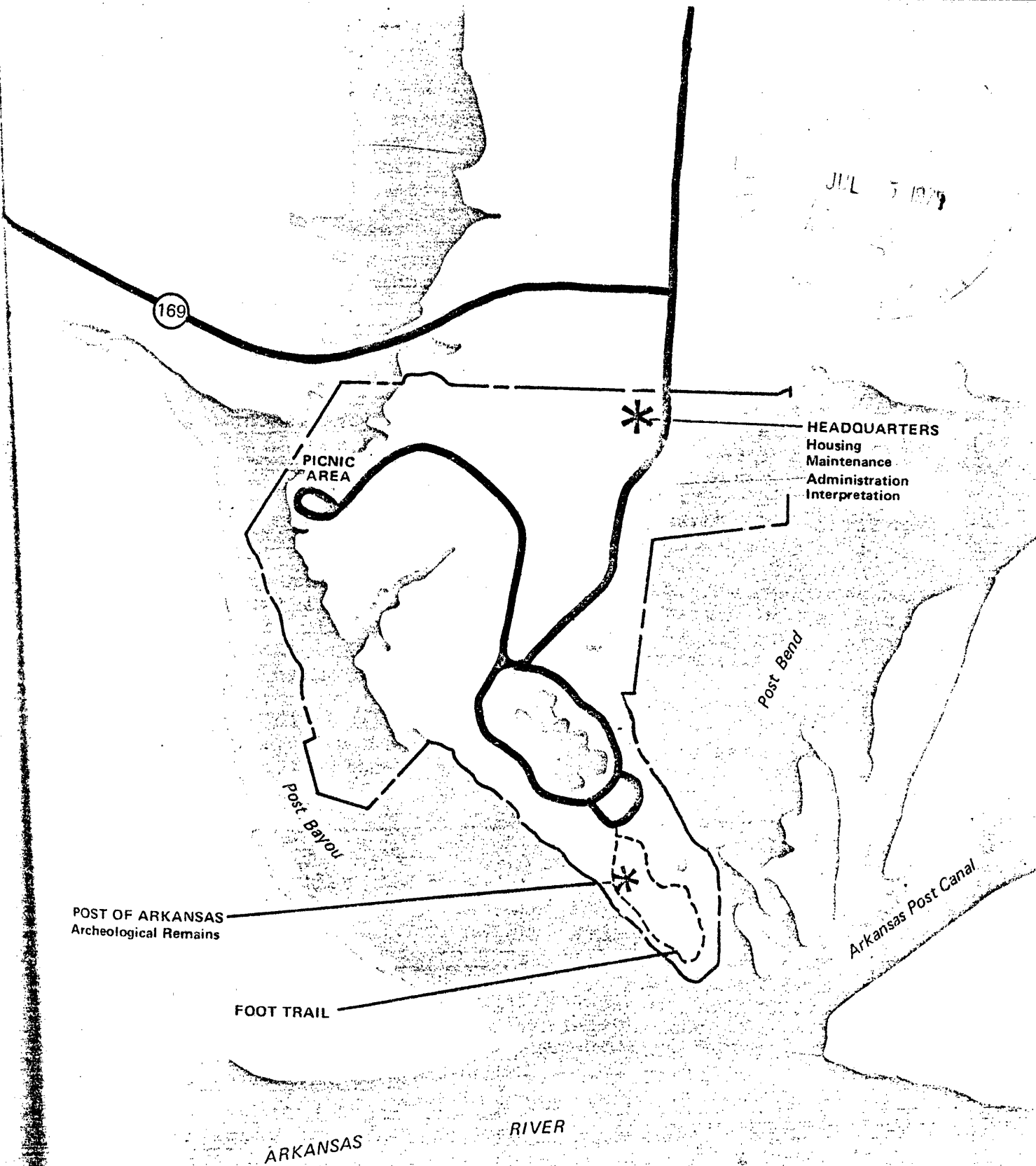
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET Arkansas Post ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

present Arkansas River; thence in a Westerly direction 2225 feet more or less along the present North bank of the Arkansas River to the point in the middle of Post Bayou where it flows into the Arkansas River; thence along the center of Post Bayou in a Northwesterly and Northerly direction 8575 feet more or less to a point which is the Northwest corner of Spanish Grant number 2307; thence due East 4206.8 feet more or less to a point which is the Northeast corner of Spanish Grant 2307; thence South 1776.7 feet more or less to the point of beginning, said tract containing 740 acres, more or less, and being located in Arkansas County, Arkansas.

See enclosed Arkansas Post Quadrangle, 7.5 minute, 1972.

JUL 5 1979



POST OF ARKANSAS
Archeological Remains

FOOT TRAIL

ARKANSAS RIVER

Post Bend

Arkansas Post Canal

PICNIC AREA

HEADQUARTERS
Housing
Maintenance
Administration
Interpretation

Post Barou

169



1200
Feet

FIGURE 7
The Site
Arkansas Post National Memorial

411 | 20,001A
DSC | JAN 75